

Message Text

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11

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ADP-00 INT-08 AID-20 CIAE-00

COME-00 FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-10 SS-15

STR-08 CEA-02 L-03 H-02 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-12 SCEM-02

RSR-01 /161 W

----- 074276

R 010907 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1905

INFO USINT ALGIERS

USINT BAGHDAD

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4982

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG XX XF US

SUBJ: US INTENTIONS RE ARAB OIL

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DESPITE LOW- KEYED NON- PROVOCATIVE
MANNER IN WHICH PRESIDENT' S ENERGY REPORT TREATED QUESTION
OF CONTINUING RELIANCE UPON ARAB OIL, LOCAL SUSPICIONS
OF UNITED STATES INTENTIONS IN THIS FIELD HAVE
APPARENTLY NOT RPT NOD IMINISHED. THESE SUSPICIONS
STEM FROM SEVERAL FACTORS, MOST NOTABLE OF WHICH SEEMS
TO BE ARAB INABILITY TO IMAGINE HOW USG CAN CONTINUE
PRESENT POLICY OF WHAT THEY REGARD AS ALL- OUT SUPPORT
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FOR ISRAEL WITHOUT HAVING IN MIND PLAN FOR PROTECTION OF ITS ARAB OIL SUPPLIES -- COMBINED WITH STEADY PROPAGANDA POUNDING FROM OUT CRITICS WHO CLAIM THAT USG HAS ALREADY DECIDED RELY UPON USE OF ARMED FORCE (DIRECT OR INDIRECT) FOR THIS PURPOSE. MOST DISTURBING ASPECT OF SITUATION IS THAT A NUMBER OF PROMINENT, STAUNCHLY PRO-AMERICAN LEBANESE IN GOVT AND IN PRIVATE SECTOR LEAVE FALLED VICTIM TO THIS BELIEF, DESPITE OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS COMBAT ANTI- AMERICAN PROPAGANDA. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR SOME TIME PRIOR TO DISSEMINATION PRESIDENT' S ENERGY REPORT, LOCAL PRESS HAD BEEN RUNNING ARTICLE AFTER ARTICLE ON US ENERGY " CRISIS" (MANY OF WHICH DREW ON MATERIAL CONTAINED IN REPORTS BY US WIRE SERVICES) AND ON ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ARAB COUNTRIES. THEORY HAS GAINED INCREASING CREDENCE THAT USG EXAGGERATING ITS ENERGY " CRISIS" AND IMPORTANCE ARAB OIL AND OIL RESERVES IN ORDER PAVE WAY FOR US INTERVENTION IN REGION, EITHER DIRECTLY OR BY USING US- EQUIPPED ISRAELI AND/ OR IRIANIAN MILITARY FORCES, TO GUARANTEE ACCESS TO ME OIL SUPPLIES. SUCH MIS-CONCEPTIONS RE US OBJECTIVES VIS- A- VIS ME OIL AND HOW WE INTEND TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES ARE NO LONGER CONFINED MERELY TO LEFTIST ORGANS (ASSISTED BY POWERFUL COMMUNIST- FEDAYEEN SMEAR CAMPAIGN DESCRIBED IN OUR A-97, APR 27). THEY HAVE ALSO BECOME WIDELY ACCEPTED AND CIRCULATED BY INDEPENDENT, NON- LEFTIST PAPERS AND WEEKLIES -- SEVERAL OF WHICH HAVE CIRCULATION AND INFLUENCE THAT EXTEND BEYOND LEBANON TO OTHER PARTS OF ARAB WORLD. BENNETT MISQUOTE, PUBLISHED HERE ON HEELS OF APR 10 ISRAELI RAID, SERVED STRENGTHEN THESE SUSPICIONS AND BOOST CREDIBILITY OF ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDIST WHO CONTINUE MOUNT MAJOR CAMPAIGN TO " EXPOSE" US FUTURE EVIL INTENTIONS IN ME. UNFORTUNATELY, BENNETT' S DENIAL WAS NOT CATEGORIC AND IN ANY EVENT DID NOT RECEIVE MUCH PLAY HERE. MISINTERPRETATION IN PRESS OF DEPUTY SECRETARY RUSH' S REMARKS IN TEHRAN (ALONG LINES JIDDA 1726) SEEMS TO HAVE HAD SIMILAR EFFECT. LOCAL PRESS CONTINUES TO PUSH ABOVE THEMES, AS REPORTED PARA 6 BEIRUT 4973.

3. SAME DISTURBING TREND HAS ALSO BEEN REFLECTED IN LOCAL INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES -- TO POINT WHERE SEVERAL USUALLY RATIONAL AND TRADITIONAL PRO- WESTERN BUSINESSMEN AND

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GOVT OFFICIALS IN LEBANON ARE BEING AFFECTED BY IT. WE PARTICULARLY DISMAYED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO HEAR FROM RELIABLE SOURCES THAT SECURITY DIRGEN DAHDAH AND FORMER FINANCE MIN (AND FREQUENT ADVISOR OF PRES FRANGIE) ELIAS SABA SUBSCRIBE OPENLY TO SUCH THEORIES, AND THAT EVEN FONMIN ABOUHAMAD HAS SAID, PRIVATELY, THAT HE BELIEVES USG IS ARMING ISRAEL SO IT CAN ACT AS REGIONAL " POLICEMEN",

IF NECESSARY, TO SEIZE AND PROTECT ARAB OIL SOURCES FOR
BENEFIT OF US. EVEN MORE DISTURBING IS LIKELIHOOD THAT,
IF SOBER- MINDED LEBANESE LEADERS BELIEVE THIS SORT OF
THING, THERE MAY WELL BE LEADERS IN MORE IMPORTANT, NON-
RADICAL ARAB COUNTRIES WHO BELIEVE IT TOO. (BEIRUT HAS AN
ESTABLISHED REPUTATION, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, AS CENTER
OF EXPERTISE AND INFORMATION ON ARAB OIL AFFAIRS). SEEN
FROM HERE, WOULD APPEAR SAUDI PETMIN YAMANI' S " THREAT"
TO LIMIT FUTURE OIL PRODUCTION CAPACITY WAS A
RESPONSE TO THESE SENTIMENTS.

4. WE OF COURSE ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO
COUNTER ABOVE TREND AND ARE MAKING BEST USE OF
PRESIDENT' S SOBER, CALM AND FACTUAL ENERGY MESSAGE. GIVEN
ATMOSPHERE DESCRIBED ABOVE, HOWEVER, PLUS FACT THAT
PRESIDENT' S MESSAGE DID NOT ADDRESS ITSELF IN MORE SPECIFIC
DETAIL TO QUESTION OF US INTENTIONS VIS- A- VIS ARAB OIL,
WE HAVING DIFFICULTY IN OVERCOMING SUSPICIONS THAT OUT
INTENTIONS ARE AS SINISTER AS POPULAR EMOTION AND ANTI-
AMERICAN PROPAGANDA WOULD HAVE ARABS BELIEVE. IN A SENSE,
OUR TASK IS MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY WHAT PRO- WESTERN
LEBANESE ELEMENTS APPARENTLY HAVE BEGUN TO REGARD AS
EMERGENCE OF AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO " PRO- AMERICAN"
POSTURE ON QUESTION OF ARAB OIL. MANY SEEM FAVORABLY
INCLINED TO THEORY THAT EUROPEAN " COMPETITION" WITH US
IN SECURING ACCESS TO ME OIL WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM
TO ADVOCATE USING OIL AS " WEAPON" AGAINST AMERICAA
(PERHAPS IN NOT INCREASING DELIVERIES AS YAMANI SUGGESTED)
WHILE INCREASING OIL SALES TO EUROPEAN MARKETS AND JAPAN.
HOUGHTON

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BEIRUT04982
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730534/aaaahlf.tel
Line Count: 147
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Dec-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <02-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 971118
Subject: US INTENTIONS RE ARAB OIL
TAGS: ENRG, US, XF, XX
To: ALGIERS
BAGHDAD
CAIRO
DHAHRAN
EB
JIDDA
KUWAIT

MANAMA
SECSTATE WASHDC

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005